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CHALLENGE

FIGHT FOR COMMUNISM · LUCHE POR EL COMUNISMO · PLP

THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

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March Through Harlem

Smash Anti-Muslim Racism

HARLEM, NEW YORK, January 9— In a neighborhood of mostly Black and immigrant workers, the antiracist chants rang down 125th Street and Broadway:

Racism Means We Got To Fight Back!,

Deportations Mean We Got To Fight Back!

Bibi, Bratton, Donald Trump —

Throw Those Racist in the Dump!

Thirty multiracial workers and students, women and men, marched against anti-Muslim racism with homemade signs and posters emblazoned, "REFUGEES WELCOME HERE." On the bullhorn, a Black woman worker said that no Muslim worker had ever evicted her or denied her food stamps—but the bosses had. These capitalist terrorists are the same super-rich businessmen and politicians building the latest wave of anti-Muslim racism!

A member of the Modern Language Association read a statement against anti-Muslim racism recently passed at its convention. Others attacked the gutter racists emboldened by politicians like Donald Trump. Everyone spoke of the importance of uniting all workers to fight back against every form of racism.

This event was organized by members and friends of the revolutionary communist Progressive Labor Party, various churches, Jewish Voices for Peace, the Professional Staff Congress (the educational workers' union at CUNY), the United Federation of Teachers, the Yonkers Federation of Teachers, and the American Postal Workers Union, among others. We distributed more than 800 internationalist, antiracist leaflets and hundreds of CHALLENGEs.

Turn Up for Communism

Following the rally, we chanted and marched to a nearby New York State government building. All along the route, workers raised fists and took multiple leaflets and CHALLENGEs. When we approached a crowd of Black workers gathered around a sidewalk table of music vendors, they turned down the music to focus on our chants. Simultaneously, they erupted with raised fists and chanted along with us!

The building we targeted houses the offices of the liberal Democratic Congressman, Hillary Clinton supporter, and all-around racist viper, Charles Rangel. A self-proclaimed champion of Black and immigrant workers, Rangel was censured on 11 counts of tax evasion and other violations. When he isn't cheating on his taxes or vacationing at his villa in the Dominican Republic, Rangel is busy preaching to workers about sacrifice and service to U.S. imperialism and openly calling for a military draft (CHALLENGE, 7/18/12, 1/30/13). For years, Rangel sold out Harlem's Black workers to promote Columbia University's expansion. The University rewarded his dedication to racist gentrification with a scholarship in his name that recruits Black, Latin and immigrant workers to diversify the face of U.S. capitalism.

Expose the Liberal Bosses, Join PLP!

In response to the New York City cops, who warned us not to use our bullhorn at the busy intersection, a church minister spoke deliberately, one sentence at a time, so everyone in the crowd could loudly repeat what he had said. He denounced Rangel and all liberal politicians as bigger dangers than Trump; while pretending to serve the working class, they actually do the bidding of ExxonMobil and Citigroup. The capitalist rulers and their liberal puppets attack Trump only because they desperately need the loyalty of Black and immigrant workers to slaughter and be slaughtered in the coming global wars of U.S. imperialism.

Students and workers in the Progressive Labor Party also spoke, putting racism and imperialism into class terms. Racism, be it directed against Muslim, Black, Latin or immigrant workers, hurts us all. It enables the bosses to super-exploit certain groups with even lower pay and worse living and working conditions, while dividing workers who share the same interests.

Following up on the minister's point, PL'ers noted the sharpening rivalry between the U.S. bosses and Russian and Chinese imperialists in the Middle East and the South China Sea—with liberals like Hillary Clinton leading the charge. The PL'ers concluded by calling for workers in all countries to join and help build a mass, international PLP of millions that can smash capitalism and its racist borders and imperialist wars with communist revolution. Today's event was a glimpse of the unity we need to build a communist world run by and for the working class. With the contact information gathered today, our diverse group of PL'ers and friends will strengthen this vital work.✪

OUR FIGHT

★Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.

★Only the dictatorship of the working class — communism — can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today's world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.

★Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world's workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.

★While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.

★Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society's benefits and burdens.

★Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of "race." Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.

★Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women — sexism — and divisive gender roles created by the class society.

★Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

★Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion's false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.

★Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

CONTACT US

Email
desafio.challenge@gmail.com
Mail
Box 808 GPO, Brooklyn, NY 11202
Internet
www.plp.org
challengenewspaper.wordpress.com

WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a "following" around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual's writing of an article.

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Editorial

Saudi Bosses Escalate Imperialist Rivalry, Open Revolutionary Opportunity

On January 2, the rulers of oil-rich Saudi Arabia, the prized possession of U.S. imperialism, recently killed an important pro-Iranian religious leader, Nimr al-Nimr. The cleric was among 47 men executed on terrorism charges in the vulnerable Saudi slave state, where plummeting oil prices have rocked the economy. After massive demonstrations and an attack on the Saudi embassy in Tehran, the Iranian capital, the Saudi capitalists cut diplomatic relations with Russia-backed Iran. These events escalated the long-running conflict between the region's two leading powers. They also moved the world closer to a broader, even more lethal, inter-imperialist conflict.

As the bosses try to discipline and pacify our class into serving in their militaries, this latest development threatens to bring even more brutal racist and sexist attacks. The international working class needs its own Red Army to destroy all these capitalist butchers. The revolutionary communist Progressive Labor Party fights to organize our class, and to smash all borders and the whole capitalist system — from Saudi capital Riyadh to Tehran, from New York City to Moscow!

Sharpening Rivalry Reveals Bosses' Limits

The execution of al-Nimr was not random. The Saudi bosses are junior partners of U.S. rulers, who are voicing second thoughts about last July's nuclear "peace" deal with Iran. Barack Obama and the finance capitalists he serves had hoped that appeasing the Iranian bosses could buy time for a military draft to take on their biggest threats: Russia and China.

Since then, however, Iran rulers made an open military alliance with Russia, supporting the Russian military's bold entrance to back their own junior partners in strategically vital Syria. Over the last four years, rival U.S. and Russian-backed armies have slaughtered hundreds of thousands of workers there. More than half of Syria's pre-war population—4.2 million forced to flee to other countries and another 7.6 million internally displaced (Brookings.edu, 9/3/15)—have been caught up in one of the greatest refugee crises in working-class history.

In a chess game of genocidal proportions, the main U.S. capitalists are caught reacting to events as they come, criticizing their own missteps and openly debating their next moves. ExxonMobil, JPMorgan Chase, the Rockefeller family and other leading ruling-class organizations bankroll groups like the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). Their members formulate policy for every U.S. president, Democrat and Republican. In "Time to Get Tough on Tehran," (Foreign Affairs, January/February 2016), the CFR called for open hostilities:

> *[T]here can be no rapprochement between [Iran and Saudi Arabia]…Iran is an exceptionally dangerous state—to its neighbors, to close U.S. allies such as Israel… Given the serious challenge Iran poses to U.S. interests, Washington should seek to roll back the country's growing influence in the Middle East while systematically eroding the foundations of its power.…Iraqi politicians, [Saudi] princes, Syrian rebels—all must play a role in pushing back against Iran.*

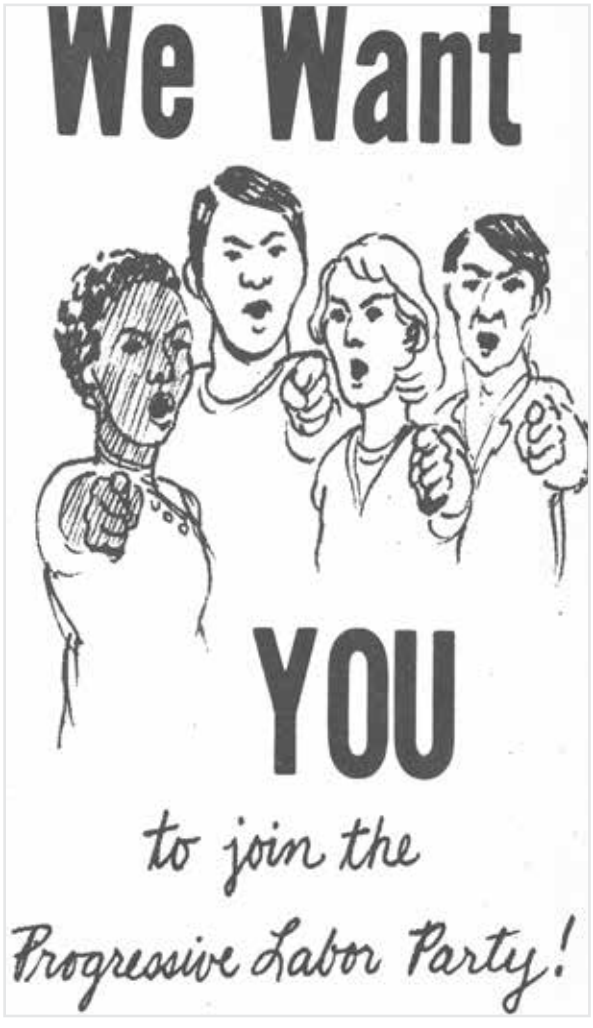
With greater unity among U.S. capitalists, these top-dog bosses believe they could win U.S. workers to rebuild their war machine, to kill and be killed in bigger imperialist bloodbaths, and to sustain the dominance of U.S. imperialism. As the CFR notes, "A heightened U.S. presence in Iraq…would mean a larger troop presence and thus a greater risk of casualties."

But as their Russian rivals make bolder moves and dictate events faster than anticipated, the U.S. bosses' limitations are sharply exposed. They are forced to make viciously racist and sexist cuts in education, healthcare and social services to prop up their sagging empire. They need to intensify their racist police terror against Black, Latin, and Muslim workers—an assault that inevitably leads to working-class fightback, not the loyalty the bosses need. The cracks in the U.S. empire grow larger by the day. And so do the opportunities for communists to organize!

Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win

Capitalists need the working class to create their profits. They also draw borders on a map and tell workers to fight and die in their imperialist wars. In 1932, the U.S. bosses helped enable the creation of Saudi Arabia to consolidate control of the world's largest single source of cheaply extracted oil. In 1944, liberal Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt agreed to back the Saudi family butchers in exchange for allowing Exxon to pump Saudi oil on the deck of a U.S. aircraft carrier. Reasserting U.S. commitment to the Saudis in 1979, Exxon-backed Democrat Jimmy Carter declared his "Carter Doctrine," a warning to potential imperialist rivals that any threat to U.S. oil interests in the Middle East would be met with military force.

The decline of U.S. capitalism is a huge opportunity for the workers worldwide. When the bosses make their war plans, they don't take into account the power of our class. The PLP fights to organize a mass revolutionary party of millions. The more workers, students and soldiers are won to communist ideas, the sooner the day will come when our class can steer world history—to turn imperialist oil wars into a revolutionary war to bury capitalism.✪



Texas Mural's Ideas Transform Into Education Struggle

TEXAS, January 13—A recent school and community art project has galvanized working-class struggle here. A widely viewed, student-created mural of a mass of students, parents and workers fighting back against the racist inequalities in our school district inspired teachers to organize and fight back.

Class Struggle Imitates Art

After weeks of conversation about the mural, teachers issued a collective statement that cited student concerns about district budget cuts and the school-to-prison pipeline. The teachers then made a plan to deliver the bold statement at the next local school board meeting. In a period of intensifying fascism and fear, this was no small feat.

At the meeting, nearly 20 teachers, students, parents and community members confronted the school board. Standing united, they called out the injustice of ongoing district budget cuts and made demands that the board restore programs cut years ago. One after another, they exposed the board's lies about providing students with a quality and equal education.

One grandparent and Progressive Labor Party member denounced the entire school board as a corrupt gang of racists. He stated that their complicity in keeping the school district in a perpetual state of crisis served capitalism by forcing underserved students into a lifetime of low-wage work, the military or prison.

This inspiring event revealed the potential of working-class unity. The teachers, students and parents who stood together got a glimpse of working-class power. When the working-class is united and armed with a communist analysis, the potential is enormous.

Liberal Union Bosses Pacify, Then Betray

This struggle, organized with rank-and-file teacher leadership, stands in sharp contrast to the misleadership of the union bosses. The following month, the school board announced an "emergency meeting" to vote on a new district health insurance plan. Given the last-minute timing of the meeting, teachers were unable to organize a rank-and-file response, and relied on their local union bosses.

The union misleaders first called on members to attend the meeting and pressure the school board to increase the district's contribution to the health plan. But the three health plan options presented to the board all had higher rates than last year. No matter what plan the board chose, teachers were facing a pay cut!

In the ensuing discussion, board members who'd been endorsed by the union expressed their "regret" in raising the rates and explained that we all had to "sacrifice." Several teachers yelled at the board in anger, but the union misleaders could only beg for a few more crumbs.

In the end, the board voted on the "least bad" option, which still raised rates and cut wages. While many teachers felt betrayed by the board, the more dangerous betrayal came from their own union, which pacified and misled the teachers to prevent them from fighting back. In practice, the union's actions led to acceptance of the school board's attacks.

Lessons Learned

The experience of these events highlights the opportunities involved in seizing and sharpening seemingly small political struggles like school board meetings. This struggle exposed the role of liberal bosses and their unions in dividing and misleading the workers away from the militant, anti-racist student-education worker-parent unity shown at the first board meeting.

We learned we must engage in struggle anywhere and everywhere, no matter how small. Where there is no struggle happening, we must create one. We must fight back against the racist injustices that workers experience every day. Daily conversations with friends and co-workers about these injustices have the potential to be organized into larger on-the-job struggles. Guided by communist politics, these struggles have the potential to inspire bold action by regular workers and to produce long-lasting class struggle.

The struggle continues! The next step is to connect worsening conditions in the school to the larger issues of war, fascism, and growing inter-imperialist rivalries around the world. We will continue to struggle for teachers, students and parents to join PLP in organizing the fight for our class and a communist future.✪

On the Interfaith Menu: Anti-Imperialist Class Unity

NEW YORK CITY—In November, the news said that Muslim terrorists killed hundreds of people in Paris. For the next days and weeks, the bosses' media sounding the same racist alarm. As a club of the revolutionary communist Progressive Labor Party, we have been organizing interfaith friendship dinners with the local Muslim community for 15 years, since 9/11, to fight racist anti-Muslim propaganda. This year's interfaith dinner came one day after the Paris shootings, and we wondered how it would go.

We carried out our usual work to ensure a successful dinner. Typically, about 70 workers attend this event. This year? Ninety! Normally, most of the attendees are our Muslim guests, with about a third of the workers coming from our congregation and other friendly groups. But this year, we saw an outpouring from our church. Workers responded to our ideas of building unity in the international working class against imperialism and racist terror.

At first, the atmosphere was a bit muted because of the shootings and the response of the racist capitalist media. But as soon as everyone started socializing, the room warmed up!

All Partake the Same Bread: Working-Class Unity

Our senior minister welcomed all of us and offered a prayer for the terrible events in France, Lebanon, and Syria. Then the Imam of our local mosque led another prayer. We broke bread together and talked. Each table was integrated with Muslims, Christians, Jews and atheists.

As the meal ended, speeches began. The mosque's president spoke first, saying that Muslims are just like everyone else. They worry about their children, their home life and their jobs. It was painful to hear these words; the racism of capitalist society makes it necessary to say the obvious.

Other workers talked about our obligations to stand up for each other, irrespective of religion. A visiting worker, whose church organizes against racist police terror and for workers' rights, connected many seemingly separate international events, and shared a plan for action.

He explained that the biggest cause of terrorism is U.S. imperialism. He related the current racist oppression of Muslims to the historic, centuries-old racism against Black, Latin, Asian, and immigrant workers. By fighting to unify and organize the international working class, he stated, we

Continued on page 4

Stop Capitalist Poison, Back Flint Workers!

The racist U.S. bosses, living down to their title as the world's biggest terrorists, have poisoned thousands of mostly Black workers and children with lead in the tap water of Flint, Michigan.

In April, 2014, to save money, state officials switched Flint's water source from Lake Huron to the Flint River. The river's water contains high levels of salt, and without treatment is corrosive to Flint's lead water pipes. Treating the water, let alone rebuilding the infrastructure, would cost money the bosses refused to spend.

Almost immediately, thousands of workers complained of rashes and hair loss. The discovery of E. coli bacteria in the water prompted the city to add chlorine to disinfect it. The chlorine accelerated the lead pipes' corrosion, resulting in even higher concentrations of both lead and E. coli. Michigan's governor, Rick Snyder, suppressed the evidence.

In December, one month after Snyder banned Syrian refugees to "protect" Michigan workers from terrorism, Flint's mayor declared a state of emergency.

Workers' real enemy is not other working-class people, but the racist bosses and their capitalist system. Flint was the site of one of the most significant labor battles in U.S. history, the Great Flint Sit-Down Strike. In 1937, from December to February, desperate and oppressed Flint auto workers occupied their factories for 44 days. Through collective action and unshakeable working-class unity, they counterattacked the bosses, took the offensive and won. The descendants of the Flint Sit-Down are now among those organizing clean water supplies for their community.

The Progressive Labor Party fights to help sustain their legacy. Workers worldwide, and especially in Flint, need that "spirit of 1937" today. As we go to press, workers are relying on donated water. We call on Party members and friends to organize donations and messages of support through their unions and mass organizations!✪

While Bosses Terrorize Immigrants, PL'ers Build Internationalism

New York City, January 13—The New Year began with a round of sexist, racist home raids and deportations of undocumented immigrants, mainly mothers and children from Central America. The Obama administration has kept its promise of terrorizing Latin workers. Immigration Customs Enforcement has arrested hundreds of immigrants, all subject to deportation, mostly in North Carolina, Georgia, Texas and California, but also in New Jersey and New York.

Best Defense: Stay on the Offense Against Capitalism

Members of the immigrant rights organization in which Progressive Labor Party members are active, as well as large numbers of undocumented workers in this working-class neighborhood, are alarmed. The organization gave workshops informing immigrants of their legal "rights" if ICE confronts them. There was also talk of finding sanctuary in churches for immigrants at risk of deportation. We in PLP are supporting these measures.

But its reformist outlook limits the organization. It is downplaying this surge in deportations as "normal" ICE activity. It relies on good lawyers in deportation hearings and tries to get local laws passed to protect immigrants. While PLP is not opposed to good lawyers, these approaches are at best illusory and at worst a liberal attempt to pacify the working class in the face of growing capitalist oppression and racist division.

Our club continues to be active in anti-racist fightback. We are organizing events and bringing communist analysis to our friends in the immigrant organization. Our comments have been applauded at two big meetings. We have called for demands that can put the working class on the offensive: no deportations, immediate acceptance of Syrian war refugees, open borders for all workers and amnesty now for all immigrants in the U.S., with no restrictions. We want fightback that will include all workers: "Black, Latin, Asian, white, same enemy, same fight." We will never accept racist state terror as "normal."

Citizen and immigrant workers must unite to fight these racist deportations. Being a citizen worker in the capitalists' most powerful imperialist nation is no protection, either. Just look at the workers in Flint, Michigan--56 percent Black, 35 percent white—whose fecal-colored water with high lead content saves the bosses money (see page 3). Capitalist state terror comes in many forms, but it hurts all workers.

What Is to Be Done?

So what does communist leadership within mass organizations mean today? To strengthen the working class, communists must:

★ Develop workers' understanding of how imperialist rivalry and constant war is related to attacks on immigrants worldwide (see next issue);

★ Relate deportations to racist surge of police killings of Black workers and youth to anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant attacks;

★ Expose how the capitalist ruling class and its media seize on "fear of terrorism" to blame immigrants and Syrian refugees for the entry of terrorists into the U.S. and Europe while obscuring the criminal, racist and fascist nature of capitalism;

★ Denounce the capitalist governments, from Europe to the US., that are closing borders and leaving refugees to their deaths. This is capitalist murder.

★ Fight like hell to build a multiracial movement to organize and win people to communism. Study alone cannot teach us what we need to learn. Fighting back in our community centers, jobs, schools, military and streets can be school for communism.

Workers will continue to find ways to cross borders and to be a source of cheap labor in the U.S. They cross these fake borders because capitalism has displaced families with inter-imperialist wars and un-natural disasters, all in pursuit of maximum profit.

Not all immigrants are unwelcome, however. The bosses will continue to welcome technologists and scientists who can help U.S. imperialism project its power worldwide and remain on top. There might be a guest worker program to allow temporary immigrants to work in agriculture, food packing and other industries, but without any of the so-called labor rights currently held by citizen workers in the U.S. Another focus will be on immigrant youth who can join the military as ground troops in the next big imperialist war.

Our club wrote a leaflet to distribute in the neighborhood, and we are organizing a march. The working class needs communist revolution. As the leaflet concludes, "The only way the international working class can destroy racism, fascism and imperialist war is to make revolution so the working class can take power and build communist society based on egalitarianism. Only the international working class can destroy the brutal, capitalist system." Join our Party!✪

Migra—
In the mountains and the hills, minutemen
come looking for the fearful
ready to shoot at you

Migra—
they want to find someone to
give him an American bullet, to get even.

They just can't deal with the prophecy;
the people keep coming day after day

Crossing mountain day and night
no matter the weather or hardship,
they still come

Migra—
I don't care if you deport me,
I'll return stronger, to organize!

—from the protest song "Migra by Quetzal
in their album *Imaginaries* (2013)

*Migra means immigration kkkops
The song warns ICE of the organizing
power of undocumented workers

On the Interfaith Menu: Anti-Imperialist Class Unity

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can become part of the solution.

After that talk, there was palpable joy from our friends and guests. More workers spoke about various aspects of our common struggle, animating and transforming the tenor of the evening. A great weight was lifted from the shoulders of those present—a coming together.

Building Antiracist, Revolutionary Devotion

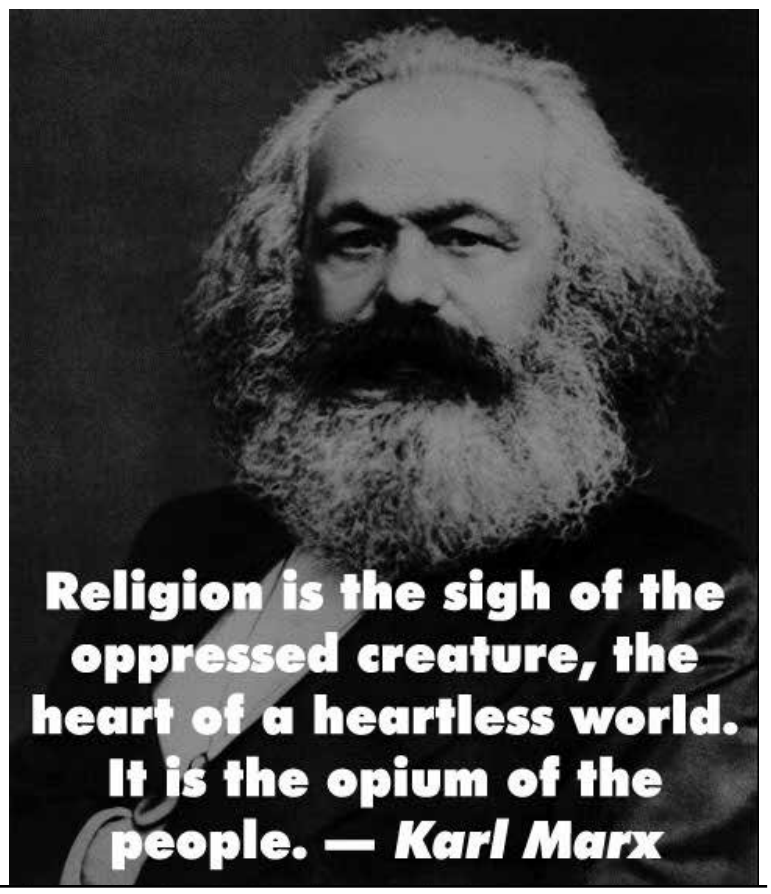
Over 15 years of building friendships and holding these dinners, our communist group within the church has built a real community. PL'ers and their friends from church have protested the oppressive surveillance of mosques by the local police department, and have been invited to many Iftars (the break-the-fast meals during the month of Ramadan).

At our most recent dinner, despite our different religious beliefs, immigration status and national origin, we shared a clarity about the source of working-class division: the tiny minority of the ultra-wealthy, the capitalist class, who profit from imperialist war and maintain power with racism, sexism and nationalism. We discussed and debated working-class revolution, the need to seize state power, and the egalitarian essence of communism.

While this particular event is a beacon of our church work, we must continue to move forward each day.

To this we are committed.

We are sharpening the political struggle in our club to distribute greater numbers of CHALLENGE to workers in our church and in the mosque. We will struggle with more workers to attend our study groups, take an active role in our Party, and plan more unifying events. Little by little, the clouds are parting and the sun is starting to shine. Stay tuned for updates, comrades!✪



ON THE JOB REPORT

Electrical Workers Call Out Sexist Bosses

I work for a private electrical contractor as a "helper." I run wires, work on live circuits, break down walls and the like. I've been in this field for two years and nothing about it has been easy. I'm in a field with a group of international workers, from China to Ghana, who are all being screwed over by the boss. Despite our terrible wages, many of these workers still suffer from capitalist ideologies. One of those ideas is sexism.

While we've had many conversations on the job, many of my co-workers are influenced by the foreman—a real sexist pig, to put it mildly. When you're green like myself, you get teased a lot and the foreman loves picking on me. For one, he thinks that all wives cheat on their spouses. I told him, "No, not in my marriage."

When you're in a relationship where you share not just your bodies but also your minds, politics, hopes and fears, there's nothing that could break that trust. He told me, "You'll see when James comes." ("James" is the equivalent of the milkman joke that exploits the fear of adultery.)

"Why is that?" I asked.

"Because you look like your woman wears the pants. I bet when you come in, you say, 'Honey can I have some sex, please? No! Oh, okay then.'"

By that time, a big crowd had formed. I told the foreman that my wife isn't my property and I understand when she isn't in the mood. The foreman shouted, "When I'm ready, she has to be ready!"

I said, "That's horrible," and walked away.

"Because I'm a man!" I heard him shout in the distance.

Later, on the train ride home with one of my co-workers, I asked what he thought. "I don't know, man," he said. I told him that I thought the foreman sounded like a rapist. My co-worker just laughed and looked away. I thought that maybe his response showed that he was afraid of saying something against the foreman, or, worse, that he might feel that type of behavior is okay.

Contracting is traditionally a male-dominated field, and there were no women present at the worksite. It's an environment that breeds sexist, misogynist, disgusting ideas about women. Under communism, we would have a different kind of workplace. We won't be segregated by race, sex or sexual orientation. Working people will just work together, without foremen.

The next day, to my surprise, a co-worker approached me and said he really admired and respected the way I handled myself, and that I didn't have to disrespect my wife to do so. When you fight sexism, your co-workers will pay attention and might even take your anti-sexist cue. Today, we argued with the foreman over his sexism till he walked away (see more next issue). This co-worker is now my friend and a CHALLENGE reader.

I learned many things from this small struggle—most of all, that we must not give in to capitalist ideas. We must stay confident in our Party's anti-sexist, anti-racist line. The working class is listening, and ready to strike back!✪

Uber Workers' Confidence Soars Through Struggle

I recently participated in my first job action, helping organize bike messengers for Uber RUSH, a delivery network the on-demand company started in New York City in April 2014.

Since I joined RUSH last year, Uber has constantly cut messenger rates. They justified these cuts by saying more customers would use RUSH because it is cheaper, meaning more money.

Uber's drivers—largely African and Middle-Eastern men who left their cab jobs for Uber's promise of higher wages in less hours—have experienced the same racist cuts under the same premise, and have to work much longer hours now to make ends meet.

NYC messengers in general are young Black and Latin workers. Bike messenger work is dangerous. We constantly have to navigate crazy traffic, potholed streets and overzealous kkkops giving us motor vehicle tickets to generate profit for the bosses. Most messengers work as independent contractors, meaning they receive no benefits (i.e. health insurance, disability, unemployment).

In mid-November, nine RUSH messengers confronted RUSH's manager at Uber's Manhattan office, demanding he release tips owed to the fleet: literally wage theft!

One messenger even threatened him with a chair if he kept ignoring them! Later that day, the manager announced Uber would dispense the tips. That showed the power workers have when we unite against the bosses!

The messenger who lead this action announced the strike for December 1. He created a Facebook page promoting it. The plan was for all RUSH messengers to take no jobs for the entire day, then show up at the office in the afternoon to make our demands clear.

Though I found out about the action days later, I sprang into action, leafleting with our list of demands from a post on the FB page.

I held routine conversations with other messengers about how capitalism exploits us as workers and Uber is making money off our efforts. This demanded the need for us to fight back!

I underestimated how much organizing comes into a successful strike. Fourteen days was too little time. Worse, we never held meetings before the action. This meant our "strike" was a disjointed effort that didn't resonate well.

Most people who clicked "Going" on the FB page didn't show up. While Facebook can be a organizing tool, it will never replace building true interpersonal relationships with workers.

Uber, in an attempt to curb the strike, offered an extra $50 bribe to messengers who completed five runs that day.

The RUSH manager heard our case in the office before stating the original rates were too expensive for the company to keep up with its massive delivery fleet, and quickly left.

Though I distributed a few CHALLENGEs, I felt upset. Self-critically, I began calling the workers sellouts. Thankfully, fellow comrades struggled with me to understand why that was the wrong line and why this action failed.

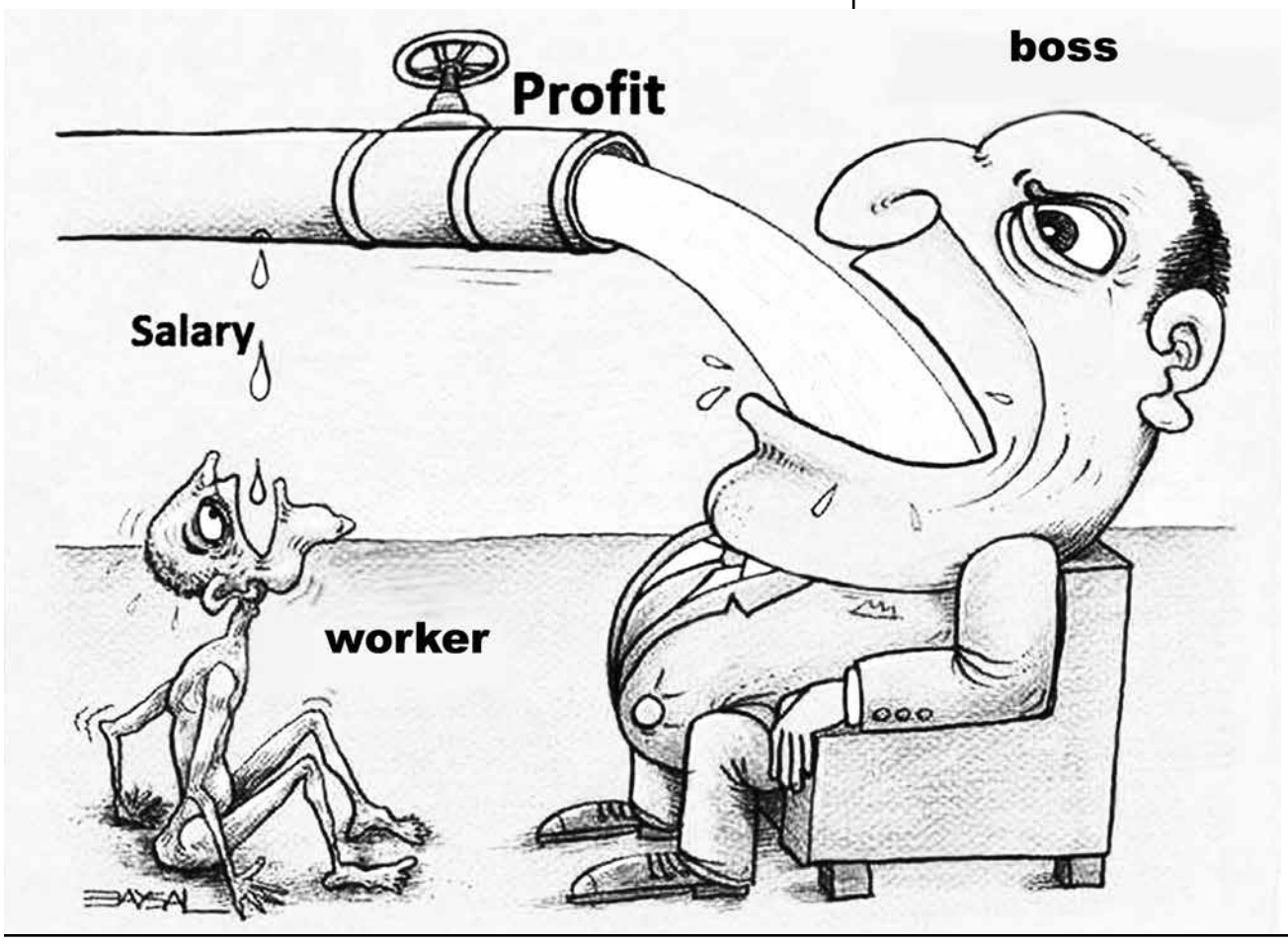
I have learned much from this experience.

Paramount is that we should not blame workers, whose minds have been poisoned by capitalist individualism and passivity. And that these actions need real organizing.

But I am making progress. One person I gave CHALLENGE to was turned out to be already familiar with and receptive to the paper. Even better, I gained the courage during this struggle to openly reveal to another worker that I'm a communist—another first for me.

I plan on forming better relationships with my co-workers, and get them to understand that communism is the ultimate solution to this garbage system.

Though I am generally asocial, I'm struggling to change that. Hopefully, I'll make things happen.✪



LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

Workers Dump on Trump

Our collective is responding to the Progressive Labor Party's call for action to fight anti-Muslim racism! Friends joined a group that invaded a Donald Trump rally to disrupt it. Another friend reached out to people she knew in her building who made racist slurs against Yemeni staff. She began a campaign posting signs of support in the entrance hall of the building.

Working with a synagogue that has forged an ongoing relationship with a Muslim congregation, we are building Jewish-Muslim working-class unity to fight racism. Their youth groups have begun doing joint social service projects together. Just last week, they co-hosted a holiday celebration of solidarity. One PL'er was part of a conversation with a young rabbinical student and a Muslim high school student. The Muslim student was angry because he wanted to study aeronautical engineering but feared he would be branded a terrorist who would blow up planes! The rabbi-to-be was appalled at the racism and pledged to fight this kind of bigotry throughout his career.

Another PL'er met with a leader of a regional denominational organization to explore ways to promote interfaith congregational solidarity throughout the state. They then appeared at a press conference to oppose anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant racism. Little by little, we are building solidarity with Muslim workers and students.

★★★★★

Gas is 'Leviathan' of Syria Civil War

It was inspiring to see our comrades from Israel write an article titled "Israeli Gas Deal Pumps Racism, Nationalism" in the previous issue (1/13). However, the article left out an important piece of information. The Eastern Mediterranean coast, also called the Levantine coast, is a major cause of the Syrian Civil War. The rights to this vast reserve of natural gas was a point of conflict that has led to the imperialist proxy war going on in Syria between U.S. and Russia.

Israel, U.S.'s proxy, has actually provided medical assistance to the fascist groups such as Al Qaeda fighting against the Syrian regime because they see that regime as their greater enemy! The Alawite coast of Latakia is where Syria has a border on the aptly named Leviathan gas field.

The map that went with the article left out that Syria is to the north of Lebanon and thus a major player in the Leviathan scramble. The PLP's Challenge blog reported on September 1, 2013 that:

The imperialist rivalry between the U.S. and Russia also stems from the U.S.'s desire to enter into the natural gas market. Russia already has a stranglehold on Europe's natural gas markets, and the U.S. would like to loosen their grasp. [According to the U.S. Geological Survey government agency], there are 1.7 billion barrels of recoverable oil and a mean of 122 trillion cubic feet of recoverable gas in the Levant oil basin.

Unsurprisingly, 1.) Syria's coast is part of the economic zone that would have the liberty of exploiting this gas and oil bonanza 2.) Israel is already exploiting it 3.) The Israel, U.S., France, Saudi, Turkey, and Qatari axis is feening to dominate this field. Russia has no interest in letting this field fall into the hands of the U.S., thereby allowing their rival to weaken their influence in Europe. Lebanon does not want to outright challenge Israel, and so is using their state apparatus to "protect the peace" in Lebanon, while actually supporting Hezbollah's backing of Assad. If Assad is preserved, then they will have a better chance at renegotiating their rights to the oil and getting a bigger slice of the natural gas bonanza. If Israel wins, then they can still negotiate since it was a proxy force doing the fighting.

Once again, oil is the driving motive for the U.S. to prepare for war and murder the working class. The PLP does not support the butcher Assad nor his fascist sexist puppet master Putin. We know that neither is a friend to the working class and we will do all that we can to build communist revolution and class struggle in their countries. The USSR and Syria were once beacons and havens for communists. We know that as PLP grows in the Middle East, we will bring communism back to the forefront.

I hope that this information helps. For more blog articles or to submit articles, comics for the blog, visit www.challengenewspaper.wordpress.com/

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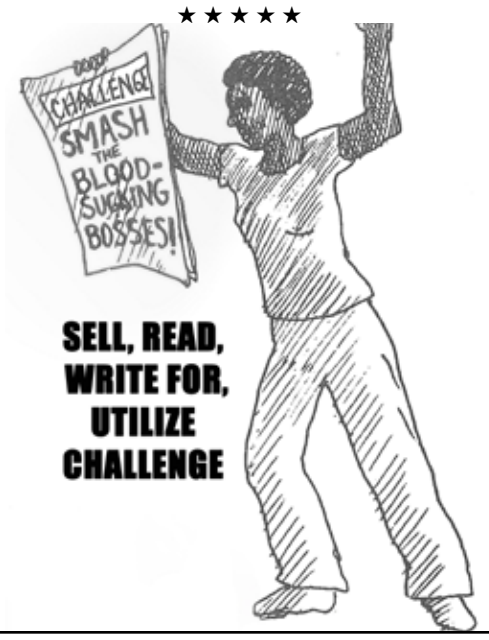


CHALLENGE AS AN ORGANIZING TOOL

Study Group Exposes Sanders

BROOKLYN, January 8—Teachers and their friends had a delicious dinner and an even more scintillating conversation about possible presidential candidate Bernie Sanders and the current elections. This teacher discussion group was focused on the how elections are used by capitalism. We began by discussing how things were going in each other's schools, getting to know one another, and introducing ourselves. This was the second time for most that they were all meeting, but there were some new people for the first time. We all watched a video on Trump from The Guardian and read CHALLENGE's July 2015 editorial that discussed Sanders in depth.

One parent, also a school psychologist, provided some insight into the current contradictions in schools when she said that "some kids just aren't ready for college." This led into a fruitful discussion about how bosses use education to sort out the working class. Though Sanders promised free college tuition to those who earned the right to go to college, this would actually be used to reinforce the idea that those who didn't make it into college deserve the struggles, oppression, and exploitation that they get. We identified this policy as racist, because primarily Black and Latin students are excluded from college.

We then connected free college to imperialist war. How? In order to pay for college tuition, Sanders would have to discipline the rich and effectively raise taxes. That way, when the time comes for imperialist war with China and Russia, the U.S. will have the money to fix the U.S.'s failing infrastructure and fund the military. So, if Sanders ever actually provided free college tuition, it may benefit the working class some, but it would actually benefit the bosses more in the long run.

With this in mind, we continued by discussing who was the bigger danger for the working class: a gutter racist like Trump or a left-leaning liberal like Bernie Sanders.

On the surface, it seems that Trump is the main danger. He whips up racism and openly talks about deporting millions of immigrants. A teacher and friend of the Party said that Sanders made a lot of promises and had a lot of appeal, followed up by another friend who said that he gave her hope. A PL'er countered that he still served the ruling class and was a career politician. When it was brought up that he didn't want to take the Super Pac money, we discussed that he was doing this in order to build his image as against corporations. This is no different than some rappers who refused to sign to a major label in order to maintain his "cred" and ultimately continue to sell lots of albums the way that he had been. Sanders Sanders will not fight against the Democratic Party in the interests of the working class when the rich will be the ones financing him and putting him in the White House. Rather, he will play right into their hands: he pacifies the working class and gets them to work within the system, all the while building for imperialist war.

One PL'er highlighted that Bernie Sanders does not have a pro-worker history. His voting record is not anti-war. Sanders had anti-war protesters arrested when they occupied his office as they were protesting his support for the Bill Clinton's bombing of Kosovo. He also supports the apartheid state of Israel. In fact, Sanders wants to be commander-in-chief of the most powerful military responsible for millions of deaths in Iraq, Syria, Mexico, El Salvador, Haiti, Vietnam, and so many other countries.

Many well-meaning anti-racists are lining up to support Sanders because they see him as the lesser evil. CHALLENGE was a major instrument in unmasking Sanders as yet another tool of the imperialists during our discussion. Though not every person there was convinced of the need to build for communist revolution by joining PLP, they did agree to come to our next discussion in February. Small Victory! By getting teachers to consistently come and discuss these important political ideas, we will eventually be able to solidify our understanding of the world as well. We have much to learn from our friends just as they have much to learn from us.

All politicians are masters of war, or aspiring to be. "Come you masters of war, you that hide behind desks. I just want you to know I can see through your masks" Sanders is just another politician in a long line of misleaders who wears a worker-friendly mask. Support working-class struggle, not politicians and their war agendas. Learn to fight, fight to learn!✪

Workers at Community College Fights Racism

BOSTON—Black, Latin and immigrant students from working class families at a small urban community college in Boston are experiencing sharpening racist attack. The U.S. capitalists' imperialist war machine is taking money away from workers' education now, and soon it will try to take their lives in the coming imperialist wars. Community colleges, with their disproportionate percentage of Black, Latin and immigrant workers, are on the front line of these imperialist cuts!

Racist Farce of 'Workforce Development'

College courses that do not serve the bosses' agenda to train unskilled, obedient workers are considered "inappropriate" and not in alignment with the curriculum at the community college level.

In the U.S., many students come to community colleges to gain entrance to a four-year university in the hopes of achieving the racist capitalist illusion of the "American Dream." This is a tool of division the bosses used to strengthen apartheid. Workers blame themselves when they can't overcome the systematic racist, sexist conditions of capitalism. It pacifies them into studying their way out of the working class, instead of organizing against the bosses.

Today, four-year graduates are no longer in great demand and the trend is against encouraging working class students to actively pursue a four-year degree. Nowadays, the meaning of "workforce development" is code for "close the gateway" to the four year colleges and universities. Degree programs that provide access to four-year schools are being starved as budget cuts continue.

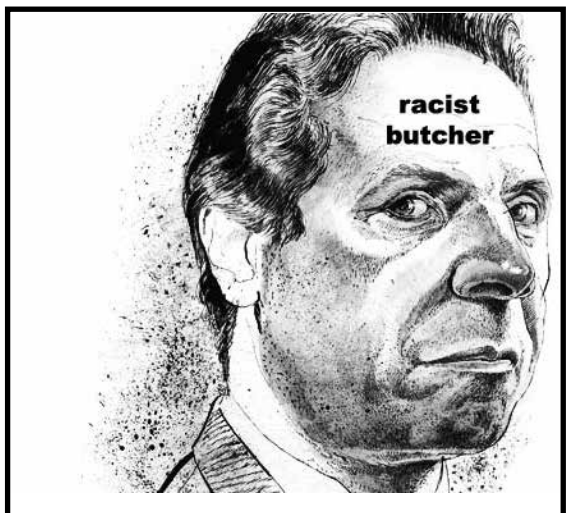
Working class access to public higher education has been decreasing dramatically. In this small urban community college in Boston, a course in science research was allowed to run with three to five students for individual instruction on science research projects. The program was a highly successful, and produced student winning national academic awards at undergraduate conferences. Recently, the course was shut down to save money—mainly because it could not meet the college administration's cutoff of about ten students per section. Students rallied last spring to save this and other courses cut, gathering over 300 signatures in a petition. A small victory may be that the course may be allowed to run again in the spring of 2016—but the challenge to prepare at least 10 students for the course and maintain high quality instruction with so many students remains.

Internationalizing the Struggle

Historically, the role of the universities and colleges in the U.S. is to serve the ruling class need to maintain social control and to support their imperialist war agenda. In the 1970s, the urban community colleges were utilized to quell future urban rebellions. They used community colleges to win Black, Latin and white workers the "American Dream" left behind to support capitalism. Today, in face of the challenges to U.S. imperialism, a new agenda has emerged: train working class youth for low-skill, low level manual labor jobs that have little job security and/or require unreasonable work and obedience to the system. This leaves many urban youth struggling with dead-end dreams, low-income jobs, less control over their lives, and open targets for the U.S. military's recruitment efforts.

Students at this college gained practical experience in this science course, and a chance to develop critical thinking skills to help them achieve a deeper level of learning in the sciences.

Fighting back in organizing an anti-racist student movement is a science too! This year, no education cuts were announced in South Africa, after massive strikes and demonstrations rocked the liberal misleadership on their heels. In Chicago, high school teachers have overwhelmingly voted to authorize another strike against racism, while in New York City and California, students, professors and staff may declare strikes this spring. Capitalism will never educate the majority of workers. We need to unite workers and students together to fight not just these attacks on the ability to learn, but against capitalism itself!✪



As CHALLENGE goes to press, New York governor Cuomo announced his proposal to cut four-year college spending in to partially pay for education workers' labor contract. Fight the bosses' ploy to pit students against workers! United we must fight, united we got to beat back this racist, sexist attack!

RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

Below are excerpts from mainstream newspapers that may be of use for our readers. Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly, LAT=Los Angeles Times

Obama campaign hunts and deports women, kids

NYT, 1/8 — Round-Up of Refugees — …a new year has dawned upon an appalling campaign of home raids by the Department of Homeland Security to find and deport hundreds of would-be refugees back to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador….who arrived…fleeing shockingly high levels of…drug violence, hunger and poverty….

…the administration has been sending agents into homes…on the job of sending mothers and children on one-way trips to the deadliest countries in our hemisphere….

…Home raids…spread fear and panic in immigrant neighborhoods across the country….

The administration…greets [refugees] with family prisons and prosecution….Migrants with no money or lawyers…confront complexities of immigration and asylum law, and lose.

Four women are Murdered Daily in Colombia

El País (Spain) Dec 25—From 2009 to 2014 in Colombia 8,020 autopsies have been performed on women who were the victims of violence. The majority were between 20 and 24 years of age. 44.48% were single and the majority of murders occurred on weekends. The figures reveal a tragic reality: the continuing increase in violence against women with death as the ultimate outcome…

…the document also shows that 73% of these killings occur in larger towns, in public areas, on streets and on highways…(this report also)…references a study by the UN office of Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) which considers Latin America as the second most dangerous region in the world for women…

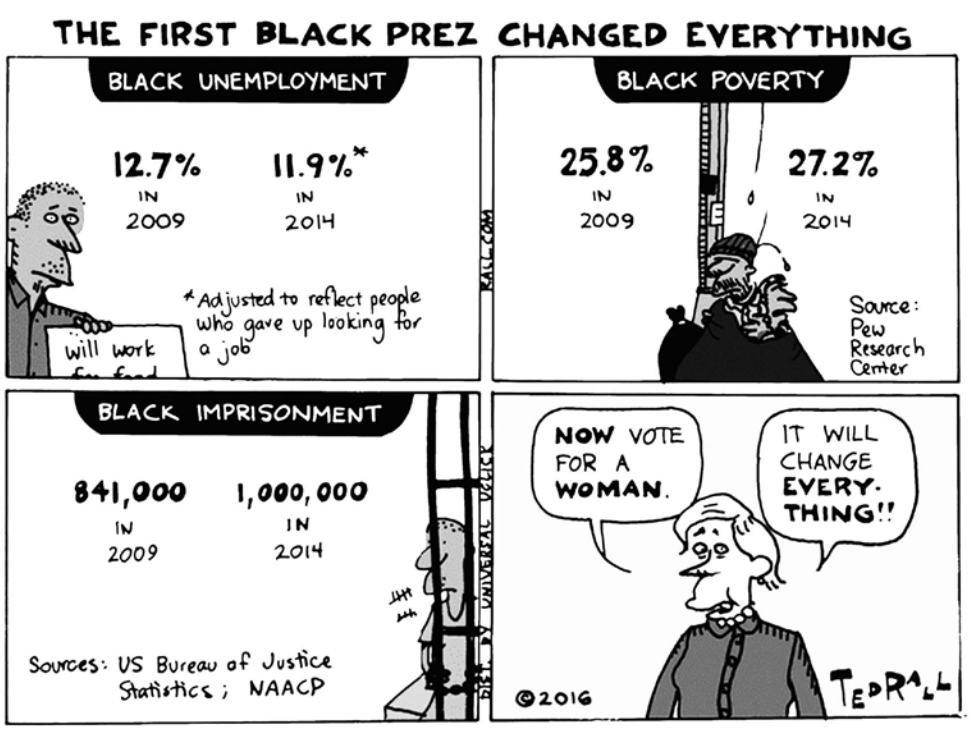
Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, the Bahamas, and Honduras are the countries of the region with the highest rates; each with more than six crimes per 100,000 women…

Kkkops murder 12-year-old, get off scot-free

NYT, 12/30 — Tamir Rice of Cleveland would be alive today had he been a white 12-year-old playing with a toy gun in just about any middle-class neighborhood…on Nov. 22, 2014.

But Tamir, who was shot to death by a white police officer that day, had the misfortune of being Black in a poor area of Cleveland, where the police have historically behaved as an occupying force that shoots first and asks questions later. To grow up Black and male in such a place is to live…hemmed in by forces that deny your humanity and conspire to kill you.

…A grand jury declined to indict Officer Timothy Loehmann in the killing and…the County prosecutor explained why he had asked the grand jurors not to bring charges….describ[ing]…Tamir's death as a tragic series of errors and "miscommunications"….



…It reflects an utter disregard for the lives of the city's Black residents….

The Police Department's disregard for life was fully evident in the way the officers behaved after shooting Tamir…. standing by the child for four minutes without giving medical assistance…. Loehmann's partner nonetheless tackled the wounded boy's 14-year-old sister as she tried to rush to his side. One can only imagine her suffering as she watched in handcuffs from the back seat of the squad car while her brother lay bleeding on the ground.

…Portraying the killing as a result of a tragic misunderstanding…[has] the reprehensible effect of shifting the responsibility for his death onto the shoulders of this very young victim.

U.S. is world's biggest arms supplier

NYT, 12/26 — Foreign arms sales by the United States jumped by almost $10 billion in 2014,…even as the global weapons market remained flat….

American weapons receipts rose to $36.2 billion in 2014,…bolstered by multibillion-dollar agreements with Qatar, Saudi Arabia and South Korea….The United States remained the single largest provider of arms around the world… controlling just over 50 percent of the market.

MORE ITEMS AVAILABLE AT WWW.PLP.ORG

Kyam Struggle Forges Antisexist, Antiracist Fighters

BROOKLYN, December 21 — Many words can describe the 29 demonstrations, one a month for two and a half years, for justice for Kyam Livingston, a Black woman worker murdered by the capitalist bosses and their cops' medical disregard. But the ones that give the most hope are, "If we don't get it—shut it down!" These words are powerful. They can be heard at our rallies against police terror, anti-Muslim racism and racist deportations. They remind us that workers have the power to change and run the world—and that all of our struggles are connected.

'Shut the Whole Damn System Down'

But the bosses don't want us to shut it down. The system is designed to keep workers busy and distracted from our need for militant fightback and communist revolution. The bosses tell us to go to court, talk to politicians, or start petitions—"proper channels" that never accomplish anything. They do not want us to fight back, because they know that is where our real power lies. When workers strike, when people refuse to buy into the rulers' lies, when we shut down the wheels of capitalist murder—that is when real change begins to happen.

The latest Kyam rally gave us more proof of this. Fighters, both new and old in the struggle, many of them members or friends of Progressive Labor Party, spoke on Kyam Livingston's street corner before we stopped traffic. We chanted, held signs and released balloons in her honor. This time we escalated the fight by marching down the street and yelling, "Justice for Kyam Livingston, killed in a Brooklyn cell!" The militancy of our multiracial group excited people, and we handed out 250 CHALLENGEs and even more leaflets. People stopped to listen and take CHALLENGE. Those in stores came out to talk to us and donate money. Some thanked us for standing up for the working class; some even joined the demonstration. When the working class unites against racist terror, we can see our power and potential to smash the brutal capitalist system.

Prison System Oppresses Women

As always, the police stood across the street, laughing and talking indifferently—until Kyam's mother, Anita, called them out with sharp words. She said that when one cop is hurt, the whole city pays attention, but when working people are injured or murdered by these lackeys of capitalism, the media look the other way. One speaker stressed that a system so unequal does not deserve to exist. Capitalism feeds off the backs of working people who go to work every day, only to die next to the rat droppings and roaches in Brooklyn Central Booking.

Our fight is also a fight against sexism. Kyam was left to die when complaining of stomach pain. Like her, there are billions of women worldwide who are denied vital healthcare services and ignored in health emergencies. Some 507 maternal deaths occur every day worldwide because healthcare services for women are often last on the list of necessary resources (United Nations, 12/3/15).

Kyam's death was tragic but not exceptional. According to criminal justice researcher Tammy Anderson's *The Incarcerated Woman* (2002), women prisoners "still receive fewer health care services" than their male counterparts. Women inmates have reported prison medical professionals who are "under skilled, often withhold medical care, and show little care or concern for them or their needs...despite their greater medical needs, women inmates receive fewer services and inferior care." This criminal neglect is worse yet for Black, Latin, and immigrant women. The pervasive mistreatment of incarcerated women, be it in immigration detention centers or prison, reflects the sexist exploitation and division that is essential to capitalism.

Someday We Shall Rule the Earth

At the end of the rally, Anita distributed candles and balloons and asked everyone to release them into the air. With tears in her eyes, she looked up and said, "This is another Christmas that I am spending without you. Merry Christmas, Kyam."

The working class can and will have better. Our class will win with working-class women leaders like Kyam and those in PLP, whose leadership grows out of their experience of the day-to-day fight against sexism and racism. As "They Shall Rule the Earth," a song in PLP's album *Revolution*, reminds us: "The working women of all shores, working night and day, often for no pay—in your liberation, men will too find salvation. Someday they shall rule the earth."

The struggle for justice for Kyam Livingston and all the other victims of police terror is a struggle for the working class. These are long and hard battles, but it is the constancy and commitment of those who come every month, wherever the battle lines are, that can and will lead to a better world. Struggles like this one are schools for communist revolution.

Dare to struggle–dare to win.✪

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